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PERSONNEL PRACTICES SURVEY - INTERIM REPORT

During 1972 the Office of Personnel became acutely aware of the need for some type of mechanism to keep abreast of the substance and the effectiveness of the approaches, philosophy and methods of personnel management applied by the various echelons of managers in the Agency. The Personnel Practices Survey was developed by the OP/Plans Staff to fill the vacuum.

The information gleaned through the Survey will be shared with other managers toward achieving improvements in the quality of personnel administration. Guidance, advice and assistance will be provided by the Office of Personnel where such a need is indicated. Our objective is to complete the Survey by February 1975 and present a comprehensive report of our findings to the DCI and other appropriate Agency officials. In the interim, we are presenting some preliminary findings which are the result of our pilot survey of five components.

TRAINING

Training is a significant activity in most components. The manner in which it is handled varies, however, from component to component and Career Service to Career Service. Some make an effort to use training as a systematic part of career development--the employee is told or provided with a list of training he should have. Some leave training almost entirely to the initiative and desires of the individual employee. Others view training as a sort of luxury or

fringe benefit with which to reward deserving employees during slack periods.

Two components have Training Selection Panels as a means of developing an intelligent and flexible tie between training and both component needs and personal career development. One of the panels identifies training courses which should be part of career development in that component and makes specific recommendations for training according to occupational groups. The other panel considers and recommends candidates for that training which is competitive and leaves other types of training to the career boards. The third component handles training strictly on the basis of employee requests. The other two components have career management boards which consider individual training needs at the same time that the boards conduct their evaluation and ranking exercises.

COUNSELING

Our initial Survey findings indicate that the availability of counseling services--and the focal point for those services--also varies from component to component. One office provides no counseling except that done by supervisors. One uses the Personnel Officer as the counselor. ^{1/14} Another has established a Career Development Office, manned by operational personnel, to assist managers and supervisors with such career development responsibilities as establishing career patterns. Two components use ^{1/14} ~~their~~ their career management officer/staff to counsel employees regarding their individual career development plans.

The pilot Survey has revealed only one office which initiates

counseling sessions with employees on a regularly established basis.

Most managers advocate an "open-door policy" even though they are aware that employees are reluctant to go to counselors without an invitation.

MOBILITY

In some components mobility means rotating between Headquarters and the field. Some view mobility as movement from position to position within the same office. Others view it as movement between Career Services or functional specialties. Mobility generally occurs simply to fill vacancies and it is frequently unplanned. Seldom is it used for developmental purposes.

Only one of the five offices seemed to be making a conscious effort to increase the extent to which rotational assignments are used in the career development process. This office has identified several positions and designated them as "rotational slots." In addition, this office has career development personnel working with line managers to establish career patterns for certain occupational groups.

COMMUNICATION

The communications techniques varied but it was rewarding to find that most offices did not equate employee communication with publications per se. They seemed to realize that the function goes far beyond publications and that channels such as opinion surveys and face-to-face discussion meetings play a vital role in the communication function.

One office had an extensive communication program that included an orientation program, bulletins, newsletters, hotline and briefings. Another used briefings, surveys, supervisors' status reports and assignment questionnaires. A third component used briefings, orientation programs, annual conferences, vacancy notices, attitudinal surveys, and annual newsletters. A fourth used reassignment questionnaires, orientation programs, regular counseling sessions, and newsletters. The last had a very limited program and the use of reassignment questionnaires seemed to be the only noteworthy technique.

SUMMARY

Training is not always the subject of special attention by panels selecting individuals for assignments, promotion, etc. Little or no effort is made to ensure that personnel records, including the official file, clearly indicate the degree to which an individual's participation in certain training courses strengthened him and improved his qualifications for additional assignments, increased responsibility, etc.

Much career information that ordinarily would be provided in a Career Service counseling program either is not given to employees or is relayed to them by their supervisors, after having been passed down through command channels. In such instances, career counseling is often fragmentary and confined to a prospective change, a problem, or some notable aspect of good or bad performance.

Parochialism still exists in the Agency and opportunity for development through rotational assignments remains limited. Career management officers and supervisors show little initiative in arranging rotational

assignments. In the rare instance where a manager did seek rotational assignments for his people, he could not get reciprocal arrangements; it was a one-way street out.

Communication programs range from very little to extensive but none of the offices are unaware of the necessity for good communication between managers and employees. However, there is a need to improve communication with individuals about those matters which affect them personally.